

FADE IN:

EXT. HOGFIGHT VALLEY - DAY

SUPER: "CZECH REPUBLIC"

Cumulus clouds dot the azure sky in this snow-covered mountain valley. A crimson Fokker Triplane and a tan Sopwith Camel [World War I fighters] pass head-on...

then roll hard into tight turns and...

begin dogfighting. Their MACHINE GUNS blaze away.

Bullets hit the Fokker, RIPPING holes in the fabric.

The Fokker goes vertical to an Immelmann and...

dives on the Camel, FIRING away.

The fabric of the Camel is SHREDDED by machine gun BULLETS.

The Camel engine SPUTTERS and the plane falls into a spiral dive, trailing SMOKE.

MEADOW - DAY

The Camel CRASHES by a fence in a snowy meadow.

The Fokker does a victory roll over the Camel as it EXPLODES. SMOKE billows from the BURNING wreckage.

SUPER: "THE QUALITY OF THE BOX MATTERS LITTLE.
SUCCESS DEPENDS UPON THE MAN WHO SITS IN IT."
BARON MANFRED VON RICHTHOFEN
LEADING ACE OF WORLD WAR I, 80 VICTORIES

FADE TO:

EXT. AIRCRAFT CARRIER - FLIGHT DECK - DAY

The smoke of the steam catapult partially obscures an F/A-18 Hornet as it slingshots off the flight deck.

EXT. NELLIS AFB - DAY

Two Air Force F-16 Falcons bearing the snarling-dog insignia of the "Bulldogs" Squadron, take off in formation and go vertical, engines ROARING, afterburners shooting FLAMES.

SUPER: "USAF WEAPONS SCHOOL/NELLIS AFB, NEVADA"

INT. BUCK'S FALCON COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

AIR FORCE CAPTAIN "BUCKSHOT" JONES is supremely confident, totally at home in the air.

VOICE 1 (FILTERED)
Bulldog, you think they'll be flying
Tomcats or Hornets?

BUCK
They'll be flying targets.

INT. NELLIS AFB - TACTICAL AIR CONTROL SYSTEM - DAY

AIR FORCE GENERAL "DUTCH" HOLLANDER (50) stands behind a TACS OFFICER at a panel of computer screens. Dutch is a worried man, and not pleased at hearing, over the radio, VOICE 1 singing Elvis Presley's "IF YOU LOVE ME (LET ME KNOW)."

SENATOR EDNA FOWLER (50s) enters. She's arrogant, obnoxious.

FOWLER
General Hollander...
(hearing the singing)
What's that?

DUTCH
(switching off the radio)
Uhhh... radio test. Senator Fowler, the
Gulfstream is already airborne.

FOWLER
I hate airplanes. Now, let me make my
position perfectly clear, General: it's
1995; close air combat is obsolete, and
so are you. My subcommittee has selected
Nellis for closure, so, let's get this
pointless exercise over with. What am I
looking at?

Dutch points at computer graphics, an outline of the "CHINA LAKE WEAPONS RANGE" in southern California. Two green lines grow from "NELLIS AFB" toward "CHINA LAKE." Two red lines grow from a point in the "PACIFIC OCEAN" toward "CHINA LAKE."

DUTCH
China Lake is the Area of Operations.
The bandits are red, our guys are green.

Fowler points at a BLIP moving parallel to the green lines.

FOWLER
What's that?

EXT. SKY - DAY - AERIAL - C-20 GULFSTREAM

The Air Force executive jet's tail bears the insignia of the 328th Squadron (winged helmet and the motto "PEACE IS HELL")

INT. C-20 GULFSTREAM CABIN (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

In the plush cabin of the executive jet, AIR FORCE GENERAL RAMSEY (55ish), an imposing figure, entertains SENATOR GRAVES (old) and political VIPs 1, 2 and 3. Ramsey would like to strangle them with his bare hands, but instead...

RAMSEY

Gentlemen, you are about to witness the first balls-to-the-wall dogfight between the Air Force and the Navy, our "top guns" against theirs.

VIP 1

(peering out a window)

Witness what? I can't see a thing.

INT. C-20 GULFSTREAM COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Ramsey enters and takes the Copilot's seat. The C-20 PILOT frowns. On the radio, VOICE 1 finishes "If You Love Me."

RAMSEY

I've got the yoke, Captain.

As the Copilot exits, Ramsey abruptly rolls the plane to the right.

C-20 PILOT

General, only combatants are allowed in the A.O.

RAMSEY

Tally ho!

INT. C-20 GULFSTREAM CABIN (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

The abrupt right roll startles the VIPs, especially VIP 1. The Copilot smirks as he takes a seat opposite the VIPs.

INT. NELLIS AFB - TACTICAL AIR CONTROL SYSTEM - DAY

On the computer screen, the red lines enter the A.O.

TACS OFFICER

Bogeys in the zone, General.

Switching on the radio, Dutch is relieved there's no singing.

DUTCH
 (into a microphone)
 Bulldog, bogeys at four zero miles,
 vector three one five.

EXT. SKY - DAY - AERIAL - TWO F-16 FALCONS

roll right with the wing Falcon at the leader's four o'clock.

BUCK (FILTERED)
 Dingo, we are in the pit. Wingdog,
 jettison fast pack.

Drop tanks fall away from both Falcons.

INT. ELVIS'S FALCON COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

AIR FORCE MAJOR LEE "ELVIS" ARCHER (VOICE 1) has Elvis Presley-style sideburns pasted on his helmet.

ELVIS
 You got an attack in mind you'd like to
 share, Bulldog?

INT. BUCK'S FALCON COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Buck kisses an old parachute D-ring, then puts it away.

BUCK
 Loose deuce, combat spread, crossover to
 a split bracket.

EXT. SKY - DAY - AERIAL - FALCONS AND HORNETS

pass head-on at high speed.

BUCK (FILTERED)
 Break!

Buck pulls a high-G left turn and Elvis goes right.

The Hornets break hard left together.

BUCK (FILTERED) (cont'd)
 High yo-yo, Wingdog. I'm gonna
 scorch the porch.

Elvis climbs and rolls to inverted as Buck rolls and dives.

The Hornets roll and dive together after Buck.

Elvis pulls hard into a dive behind the Hornets.

INT. BUCK'S FALCON COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Buck hears a frantic "WARNING" TONE, but doesn't flinch.

BUCK

They've got tone on me. Watch this.

EXT. DESERT - DAY - AERIAL - BUCK'S FALCON

pulls out of the dive and skims low along the desert floor. A horizontal dust plume billows up behind the ROARING plane.

BUCK (FILTERED)

Fifty feet at the speed of heat.

INT. ELVIS'S FALCON COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Elvis hears the steady "TARGET ACQUIRED" TONE.

ELVIS

I've got tone on wing!

EXT. SKY - DAY - AERIAL - FALCONS AND HORNETS

Hornet 2 rotates to vertical and kicks in afterburners.

ELVIS (FILTERED)

Wing's going vertical, Bulldog!

BUCK (FILTERED)

Stay on the leader.

ELVIS (FILTERED)

Leader's loose! I got a lock on wing!

BUCK (FILTERED)

Don't take the bait, Wingdog!

Elvis's Falcon goes vertical after Hornet 2.

Hornet 1 goes vertical after Elvis's Falcon.

INT. NELLIS AFB - TACTICAL AIR CONTROL SYSTEM - DAY

TACS OFFICER

General, the Gulfstream is in the A.O.

DUTCH

Oh shit... General Ramsey.

BUCK (FILTERED)

Wingdog's dead. I'm solo.

Fowler's arched eyebrow sneers at Dutch. He sighs.

EXT. SKY - DAY - AERIAL - FALCON AND HORNETS

The Hornets break in opposite directions, roll over the top and dive, leaving contrails which form a brassiere shape.

Buck's Falcon splits the approaching Hornets and goes vertical, alone...

pulls hard over the top of the loop, rolls, and closes in behind the Hornets.

INT. BUCK'S FALCON COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Buck gets the "TARGET ACQUIRED" TONE and LOCK. Buck fires. A BEEP confirms the "kill."

INT. NELLIS AFB - TACTICAL AIR CONTROL SYSTEM - DAY

BUCK (FILTERED)
Score one butthook.

Dutch pumps his arm like Tiger Woods after a long putt.

INT. C-20 GULFSTREAM COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Looking out and down at the dogfight, Ramsey smiles.

INT. BUCK'S FALCON COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Buck gets TONE and LOCK again, but, instead of firing, rolls into a high-G turn away from the Hornet.

BUCK
Okay, swabbie, let's see what you got.

EXT. SKY - DAY - AERIAL - FALCON AND HORNET

As Buck's Falcon and Hornet 1 pass head-on at high speed, the Hornet goes vertical, with afterburner.

The Falcon pulls up into position under the vertical Hornet.

BUCK'S POV - HUD IN WINDSCREEN - TARGETING GRAPHICS

Hornet 1's orange-glowing twin engines sit solidly in the middle of the targeting diamond. Buck gets TONE and LOCK.

Buck FIRES and hears and a kill-confirming BEEP.

BUCK (O.S.)
Splash two butthooks!

INT. NELLIS AFB - TACTICAL AIR CONTROL SYSTEM - DAY

Dutch cheers, elated, but Fowler couldn't care less.

DUTCH
Great job, Bulldog!

INT. C-20 GULFSTREAM COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

RAMSEY
Bulldog, I've got a C-20 full of VIPs who are all wet for a victory fly-by.

BUCK (FILTERED)
I aim to please, Cee Two Zero. Hold your heading for starboard pass.

Ramsey winks at the disapproving C-20 Pilot.

EXT. SKY - DAY - AERIAL - FALCON AND C-20 GULFSTREAM

Buck's Falcon ROARS past the right side of the Gulfstream.

INT. C-20 GULFSTREAM COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

SONIC BOOM. Ramsey jerks the yoke around wildly.

RAMSEY
(to himself; smirking)
Thank you, Captain Jones.
(smiling at the C-20 Pilot)
I hate politicians.

INT. C-20 GULFSTREAM CABIN (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

The plane jumps around violently, terrifying the VIPs.

VIP 1
What the?

VIP 2
Holy smokes! Who is that?

VIP 3
I'll have that son-of-a-bitch's wings!

Faint-hearted VIP 1 frowns at the big wet spot on his pants.

INT. BUCK'S FALCON COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Buck takes out the old parachute D-ring and kisses it.

BUCK
Score two butthooks and a pork farm.

Buck switches radio frequencies.

BUCK (cont'd)
Dead swabbies, form up on Wingdog.

EXT. NELLIS AFB - FLIGHTLINE/RUNWAY - DAY

Silver Suits blast SIRENS and spray the F-16 from their crash trucks as it taxis to a jubilant reception on the flightline where Elvis's Falcon and the Navy Hornets are already parked.

EXT. NELLIS AFB - OFFICERS' CLUB - DAY

Buck and Elvis arrive on a "FOLLOW ME" truck, with a crowd.

LIEUTENANT COMMANDERS "DUKE" WINDSOR and "SPLASH" HOOKER (the Hornet pilots), handcuffed, with "POW" signs around their necks, arrive in a Security Police (SP) Jeep. In the b.g., the C-20 Gulfstream lands.

INT. NELLIS AFB - OFFICERS' CLUB - DAY

As Celebrants pour in, Bartenders hand them mugs of beer.

SPs lead Buck, Elvis, Duke and Splash to a stage while the deliriously happy crowd chants "SPEECH!"

Elvis pushes Buck forward. The crowd cheers.

Buck pushes Duke and Splash forward. The crowd boos.

BUCK
Lieutenant Commanders Duke Windsor and
Splash Hooker have a few words to say.

DUKE
Zoomies are... really good.

The crowd boos. Duke hands the mike to Splash.

SPLASH
Zoomies are... worthy opponents.

The crowd is booing again as Ramsey enters.

DUKE AND SPLASH
Zoomies are the best fighter pilots in
the world.

The crowd roars.

Buck removes her helmet. Her hair falls to her shoulders. She's a good-looking, tough, hard-body woman in her thirties. No makeup, nature's eyebrows, she doesn't give a damn what she looks like. For her, makeup is a flightsuit and an F-16.

Duke and Splash are stunned and embarrassed.

DUKE

Oh shit.

SPLASH

We're never gonna hear the end of this.

Grinning, Buck bows and picks up a microphone while Elvis punches buttons on a karaoke machine.

BUCK

Let's hear it for... The Nellis Elvis!

The crowd roars. Buck sees Ramsey signalling "Come here."

Buck grabs a beer and reluctantly joins him at a back table.

BUCK (cont'd)

Captain Jones, General --

RAMSEY

(artificially cheerful)

Ramsey. Take a seat, Captain.

While Buck and Ramsey talk, Elvis sings a modified "HOUND DOG." Women paint targets on Duke's and Splash's butts, then pin tinfoil tailhooks to their asses.

ELVIS

(singing)

Well, they said you was Top Gun,
Well, that was just a lie,
Yeah, they said you was Top Gun,
Well, that was just a lie,
Yeah, you ain't never shot a bogey
And you don't know how to fly.

RAMSEY

You're stick and rudder.

BUCK

Sir?

RAMSEY

What'd you cut your wings on? Gliders?
Crop dusters?

BUCK
Dusters. How'd you know that?

RAMSEY
Tell me, Captain, are you a real fighter pilot, or just a flashy rocket jockey?

BUCK
Your point, General?

RAMSEY
Nellis is three gas-and-go's from the nearest MiG. You may as well be a Navy Seal guarding Kansas.

BUCK
I have an idea where this is going, but I'm not. At Nellis, I fly bandit every day, dogfight the best of the best, and I never have to kill anybody. You couldn't pry me out of here with a crowbar.

When Drunks come for Buck, Ramsey reaches to shake hands and slyly drops a pill into Buck's beer. Ramsey leans in close.

RAMSEY
What if you had a chance to fly against the best fighter pilot in the world?

BUCK
General, I am the best fighter pilot in the world.

Buck smiles and grabs her beer as the mob hauls her away.

RAMSEY
You better be.

INT. NELLIS AFB - HOLLANDER'S OFFICE - DAY

Dutch grimaces and Fowler smiles as Graves and the Gulfstream VIPs enter, furious. VIP 1 is wearing Air Force pants.

VIP 2
What the hell kind of place are you running here?

VIP 3
I want that man's wings! I want his butt grounded!

General Ramsey enters and sits down. He listens patiently.

DUTCH
 Senator, please, let's not let a minor
 incident --

GRAVES
 Minor incident my ass! That was a breach
 of the Code of Conduct. There isn't a
 single pilot that --

DUTCH
 That could outfly Buckshot Jones.
 Gentlemen, we can't afford to ground a
 pilot with her talent.

GRAVES
 Her?

DUTCH
 She's a modern-day Eddie Rickenbacker.

VIP 3
 I don't care if she's Jonathan Livingston
 Seagull, I want her butt in a sling.

Dutch gives VIP 3 a look for this inappropriate remark.

VIP 1
 I'm not surprised he's a girl! Attacking
 our aircraft was an act of cowardice.
 She nearly killed us!

GRAVES
 She should be court-martialed.

DUTCH
 (to VIP 1; losing his
 composure)
 She wasn't *attacking* your plane, nitwit.

FOWLER
 Put whatever spin on it you like,
 General, Buckshot Jones is a rogue.
 We need team players, not cowboys...
 girls.

RAMSEY
 I have a solution which will make everyone
 happy... except, of course, Captain Jones.

INT. NELLIS AFB - OFFICERS' CLUB - NIGHT

Buck drinks beer and armwrestles Duke to a draw while
 Onlookers cheer.

INT. NELLIS AFB - HOLLANDER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Dutch paces nervously. Ramsey peruses Buck's personnel file.

RAMSEY

Jane Jones. That's her name? Really?
No wonder she's so butch. Imagine
growing up with a name like that!

INT. NELLIS AFB - OFFICERS' CLUB - NIGHT

Buck's eyes roll a little. The pill is taking effect.

INT. NELLIS AFB - HOLLANDER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

RAMSEY

Thirty-three... never been married... no
living relatives... a loner, no friends.

DUTCH

Except Major Archer. They're like twins.
What am I going to tell him?

RAMSEY

Ship him to Edwards. Stealth training.
He'll be happy and *incommunicado*.

DUTCH

I thought, if we can splash the Navy's
Top Guns...

RAMSEY

Relax, Dutch, everything's gonna be fine.

DUTCH

Yeah, tell that to the pilots who find
themselves in a rhubarb over some third
world oil patch and they haven't had ten
minutes of combat maneuvering.

RAMSEY

Trust me, no one's gonna touch Nellis.

INT. NELLIS AFB - OFFICERS' CLUB - NIGHT

Unconscious Celebrants litter the club. Splash stumbles out
the door with a Woman. SPs carry Buck out, unnoticed.

EXT. NELLIS AFB - FLIGHTLINE - NIGHT

SPs carry unconscious Buck into the 328th's C-20 Gulfstream.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LEIPHEIM AFB - OFFICERS' QUARTERS - BUCK'S ROOM - DAY

Buck wakes up in her flight suit on an unmade bed. Cold, hungover, and confused, she looks around at the dingy room.

INT. LEIPHEIM AFB - OFFICERS' QUARTERS - COMMONS - DAY

Buck, looking much the worse for wear, enters the messy room and sees MAJOR BUTLER (40), Ramsey's gutless lackey, shooting a cue ball at empty beer cans.

BUTLER

Hey, Dorothy, welcome to Oz! I'm Major Butler. Follow Me.

BUCK

I'm not going anywhere until I...

Major Butler is out the door. Buck reluctantly follows.

EXT. LEIPHEIM AFB - FLIGHTLINE/ADMIN BLDG - DAY

It's sunny and cold. As Butler drives the Jeep, Buck surveys the old runways, vintage buildings, and run-down hangars.

BUCK

Where am I?

BUTLER

Leipheim Air Force Base, Germany.

BUCK

Germany! I'm in Germany?

(beat)

Why does the base look so... rundown?

Buck sees four F-16s flying in a very sloppy formation.

BUTLER

Time... budget cuts... peace.

Butler parks the Jeep and leads Buck into the Admin Building. The small, windowed third floor serves as the control tower.

INT. LEIPHEIM AFB - ADMIN BLDG - RAMSEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Butler and Buck enter. Photos of twelve pilots, most with vintage fighters, line a wall. A window looks out on the runway. General Ramsey, smoking a cigar, eyes Buck. Behind Ramsey is a replica of the 328th Squadron insignia -- the winged helmet and the motto "PEACE IS HELL."

RAMSEY
Is military protocol passé?

BUCK
(snapping to attention)
Captain Jones... reporting... sir.

RAMSEY
Lieutenant Jones.

BUCK
Lieutenant?

RAMSEY
General Hollander had a choice -- ground
you, or send you here.

BUCK
What?

Ramsey unlocks his file cabinet and pulls a file.

RAMSEY
Do you recall the Gulfstream you boogied?

BUCK
Yessir, but the pilot...

Ramsey hands Buck a page from the file.

RAMSEY
You left some VIPs with skidmarks in
their shorts. That was the "crowbar."
So, do you prefer to fly here, or resign
your commission?

Through the window, Buck sees an F-16 landing.

BUCK
Fly... here... sir.

Ramsey looks at the open file on his desk.

RAMSEY
Two MiGs in Desert Storm. B.V.R. kills?

BUCK
No, sir, they were close range. Cannon.

RAMSEY
Why cannon?

BUCK
They were tight on my wingman, Sir.

RAMSEY
Buckshot. How'd you get that call sign?

BUCK
I got both MiGs in one pass, Sir.
(explaining the obvious)
Like a shotgun.

RAMSEY
So, you killed two men. How do you feel about that?

BUCK
A whole lot better than if they were being asked that question.

RAMSEY
Go clean the puke off your flight suit, and clean the shit off your attitude, Lieutenant. Be on the flightline, tomorrow, ready to fly. We'll see if you have the grit to survive in the Three Two Eight. Dismissed!

INT. LEIPHEIM AFB - OFFICERS' QUARTERS - COMMONS - DAY

CAPTAIN "HOLY JOE" HELLER, a Californian with gothic religious tattoos, tosses a beer to laid-back, Irish-American MAJOR "NARC" O'MALLEY. They're in civvies. Butler and Buck enter.

NARC
No, not the Zunfthaus. Fraulein Helga prowls that dive.

BUTLER
You boys headin' to Ulm?

HOLY JOE
Heil ja, it's Herr Einschtein's birthday!

NARC
Der Ulmsters lieben zu toast der favorite son!

Narc and Holy Joe clank their beer cans together.

BUTLER
Lieutenant, this is Major "Narc" O'Malley and Captain "Holy Joe" Heller.

BUCK
Holy Joe?

NARC
He's an ordained minister.

Buck reaches to shake hands, but Holy Joe licks his first two fingers and touches Buck's forehead.

HOLY JOE
Bless you, my child.

BUCK
(shaking Narc's hand)
Narc?

HOLY JOE
Narcoleptic. He can fly in his sleep,
and usually does.

BUTLER
Gentlemen, our new Piglet, Lieutenant
"Buckshot" Jones.

Narc and Holy Joe chill. Narc wipes his hand on his pantleg.

NARC
Luck o' the Irish, Lieutenant.

HOLY JOE
Fuck luck. Pray, and watch your six.

NARC
(walking out with Holy Joe)
Looks kinda old for a lewey.

HOLY JOE
Doin' time at Leipheim.

The door closes behind Narc and Holy Joe.

BUCK
What was that about?

BUTLER
Routine hazing; here, you're a doolie.
Get some rest. Big day tomorrow.

INT. LEIPHEIM AFB - OFFICERS' QUARTERS - BUCK'S ROOM - NIGHT

Buck is lying in bed, staring at the ceiling, wondering.

EXT. LEIPHEIM AFB - FLIGHT LINE - DAY

Crews prep two F-16s. SERGEANT BARNES (40), the strangely aloof Crew Chief, talks with Ramsey, who is in a flight suit.

RAMSEY
Is the APG rigged?

BARNES
Red toggle on your panel.

Buck walks up, wearing a flight suit.

RAMSEY
Well, Lieutenant, are you ready to prove that pigs can fly?

BUCK
Pigs?

RAMSEY
In this unit, doolies are "Piglets."
(introducing)
Sergeant Barnes. Your crew chief.

BARNES
Your Viper's ready, ma'am. Standard rack, five hundred rounds and a fast pack.

BUCK
What are all these patches?

BARNES
My pilots prefer them to holes, ma'am.

RAMSEY
Turn around, Piglet.

Ramsey snaps a photo of Buck beside the F-16...
then holds out a clipboard and pen for Buck.

RAMSEY (cont'd)
Sign here.

BUCK
What?

RAMSEY
NATO red tape -- you're carrying live ordnance. C'mon, c'mon.

Buck signs it, then Ramsey bends the top page back, treating the signing as a routine inconvenience.

RAMSEY (cont'd)
And the copy. Mission call sign is
Gladiator.

BUCK
(signing the bottom page)
Sir, I don't have any charts or...

RAMSEY
Mount up!

Climbing to the cockpit, Buck notices two hammer-and-sickle emblems near the canopy. She gives Barnes a questioning look.

BARNES
MiG kills, ma'am.

BUCK
Sergeant, you call me ma'am one more
time, you'll be shittin' teeth.

BARNES
Yessir. Sorry, sir.

BUCK
All I want from you is a mean machine.
Are we tight?

BARNES
We're tight, sir.

Buck climbs into the cockpit. Barnes turns away.

BARNES (cont'd)
Oh fuck, I'm in love!

EXT. LEIPHEIM AFB - MAIN RUNWAY - DAY - TWO FALCONS
take off in close formation.

EXT. SKY - DAY - AERIAL - TWO FALCONS
fly along a river at very low altitude.

RAMSEY (FILTERED)
That river is the Danube, your trail of
bread crumbs. Follow me, sucked echelon.

Buck's Falcon drops directly behind and below Ramsey's and they accelerate to... BOOM... supersonic speed.

EXT. HOGFIGHT VALLEY - DAY - AERIAL - TWO FALCONS

enter the oblong bowl of a valley, level with the ridges.

INT. BUCK'S FALCON COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

RAMSEY (FILTERED)
Ready for some fun, Piglet?

Buck hears a WARNING TONE and sees BLIPS on her radar screen.

BUCK
Glad One, bogeys on the nose!

RAMSEY (FILTERED)
Let's check 'em out. Stay at my six.

EXT. HOGFIGHT VALLEY - DAY

Two MiG-29 Fulcrums streak past the Falcons, head to head.

BUCK (FILTERED)
Whoa Nelly! They're MiG-29s, Russian!

RAMSEY (FILTERED)
Looks like they wanna scrap. Engage the wing, Piglet.

Buck breaks hard left. Ramsey breaks right and climbs.

The lead MiG climbs to the right. The wing MiG breaks right.

INT. RAMSEY'S FALCON COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - SAME

Ramsey flips a red toggle on his control panel.

INT. BUCK'S FALCON COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - SAME

Buck hears a CLICK. Targeting data disappears from her HUD (Heads-Up Display).

BUCK
Glad One, my APG is down!

RAMSEY (FILTERED)
Radar is for sissies. Use your gun.

INT. RAMSEY'S FALCON COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - SAME

Orbiting the valley, Ramsey watches the dogfight.

BUTLER (FILTERED)
You should've told her.

Irritated, Ramsey picks up a handheld radio and answers.

RAMSEY
I couldn't take the chance. Now, shut up
and get back to work, Major.

EXT. HOGFIGHT VALLEY - SAME

Buck's Falcon and the MiG approach head-on. The MiG FIRES.

INT. BUCK'S FALCON COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - SAME

Buck hears the THUDS of cannon shells hitting her plane.
Sparks CRACKLE and fly around the cockpit.

EXT. HOGFIGHT VALLEY - SAME

The dogfighters pass head-on and pull up into opposing loops.

At the top of the loop, inverted, Buck's Falcon fires a
stream of TRACERS.

Several TRACERS hit the MiG, which continues the loop.

At the bottom of the loop, they FIRE at each other again and
both roll left into counterclockwise turns.

INT. BUCK'S FALCON COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - SAME

Buck pulls on her FLAP and LANDING GEAR LEVERS...

pulls back on the THROTTLE and on the SIDESTICK CONTROL.

EXT. HOGFIGHT VALLEY - SAME

Flying "dirty" (flaps and landing gear down), the Falcon
turns tightly at low speed.

EXT. BUCK'S FALCON (IN FLIGHT) - SAME

The flaps and landing gear abruptly retract on Buck's Falcon.

INT. MIG COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - SAME

COLONEL KOZHEDUB smiles when he sees the tail of the Falcon
ahead of him, turning slowly, close to his line of fire.

EXT. HOGFIGHT VALLEY - SAME - BUCK'S FALCON

dives at the base of the ridge, the MiG closing in behind it.

INT. RAMSEY'S FALCON COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - SAME

With his head turned, watching the dogfight, Ramsey laughs.

RAMSEY
(to himself)
Colonel Kozy, you are a dead man.

EXT. HOGFIGHT VALLEY - SAME

Buck's Falcon dives to the base of the ridge, barely able to make the turn without crashing into the trees.

The MiG follows, but, flying faster, can't turn inside the base of the ridge and pulls into a climb up the ridge.

INT. BUCK'S FALCON COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - SAME

Buck pulls on the control stick and pushes on the THROTTLE.

As Buck looks up through the top of her canopy for the MiG, the high-G forces contort her face.

EXT. HOGFIGHT VALLEY - SAME

At the top of its loop, inverted, Buck's Falcon FIRES at the MiG as it crests the ridge.

As the MiG flies through a stream of TRACERS from the Falcon, pieces of metal fly off and its engine starts SMOKING.

The smoking MiG waffles into the trees and... EXPLODES.

INT. RAMSEY'S FALCON COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Ramsey looks with satisfaction at the EXPLODING MiG.

RAMSEY
Good job, Piglet. Form up on me.

EXT. HOGFIGHT VALLEY - DAY

As Ramsey and Buck fly by the other MiG, it rocks its wings. Buck's Falcon is in the four o'clock position behind Ramsey.

INT. BUCK'S FALCON COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Buck sees that her FUEL LEVEL is dropping rapidly.

BUCK
I'm losing fuel, Glad One. I may have to pop my cherry.

RAMSEY (FILTERED)
Not on this ride. I forgot to tell you,
your panic rack's been neutered.

BUCK
Why the hell would you do that?

INT. RAMSEY'S FALCON COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Ramsey can't resist the joke...

RAMSEY
Known cure for premature ejection.

BUCK (FILTERED)
Save that one for the boys.

Buck's Falcon ROARS by, climbing, afterburner glowing.

RAMSEY
What are you doing?

BUCK (FILTERED)
I'd rather burn it than leak it.

INT. LEIPHEIM AFB - ADMIN BLDG - CONTROL TOWER - LATER

Two CONTROLLERS monitor the runway and screens.

RAMSEY (FILTERED)
Leipheim Control, Glad One. Dead-stick
Falcon coming in... maybe.

CONTROLLER
Gladiator, be advised, deaf bogey in the
pattern.

INT. BUCK'S FALCON COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Buck catches sight of something ahead.

BUCK'S POV - THROUGH FALCON CANOPY - SPAD BIPLANE ON FINAL
directly ahead, in the way of Buck's landing.

BUCK (O.S.)
General, what the hell is that on final?

RAMSEY (FILTERED)
Our very own Eddie Rickenbacker, with no
radio.

INT. BUCK'S FALCON COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Buck moves the sidestick control -- no response.

BUCK
I've lost hydraulics!

Buck grabs the "CANOPY RELEASE HANDLE."

EXT. LEIPHEIM AFB - MAIN RUNWAY - DAY

Buck's Falcon SLAMS onto the runway under the Spad, barely missing it. The Spad rocks violently in the turbulent wake.

The aft-hinged canopy BLOWS off the careening Falcon, while the tires SHRED and the bare wheels shoot a plume of SPARKS.

The Falcon CRASHES into a snow-covered dirt revetment.

Buck scrambles out of the wrecked, smoking plane and runs for her life. The Falcon EXPLODES, flinging her to the ground.

Crash trucks arrive and Silver Suits SPRAY foam on the F-16.

As Buck gets up and brushes herself off, CAPTAIN HARRY "TY" MACMILLAN (40), the Spad pilot, walks up and SUCKER-PUNCHES her. Ty's face is dirty from open-cockpit flying, but his old-timey goggles created a comical raccoon face.

TY
What the hell is wrong with you? You almost killed me!

BUCK
Sorry. I ran out of gas.

TY
(sarcastically)
Oh. That's different.

Ramsey arrives, walking from his Falcon, parked behind the Spad.

RAMSEY
Freddy, meet the new hog.

TY
Hog?

Buck removes her helmet. Ty sees that he's a she. He fumes with angry disbelief.

TY (cont'd)
She's the hog?

Ty looks daggers at Ramsey, then strides off to the hangars.

RAMSEY
(re: Ty)
Sorry about that.

BUCK
Trust me, it's familiar territory.

Buck sees Ramsey looking at the burning F-16.

BUCK (cont'd)
Sorry about the plane.

RAMSEY
Fuck a Falcon. Uncle Sam's, not mine.

BUCK
General, what the hell is going on here?

RAMSEY
We'll talk tomorrow. You're gonna think you've died and gone to heaven... which you have.

INT. LEIPHEIM AFB - PILOTS' LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Buck enters. Holy Joe, Narc, BUZZ, BLOOD (African-American), BOOM BOOM, PETER, ZEKE (Japanese-American), and wise-ass JACKAL (Mexican American) are surprised to see her.

NARC
Bless me soul, it's Piglet! Or would that be Piglette?

HOLY JOE
Hey, man, we thought you were bacon.

JACKAL
Yeah, nice landing.

BLOOD
(pinching Buck's cheek)
Flesh and bone. She ain't Piglet no more.

The Pilots snap to attention and give Buck a Nazi salute.

ALL
Heil der Hog!

NARC
Shouldn't that be Sow?

The Pilots pause for a moment to consider Narc's question, but then they shake it off as too difficult.

The Pilots hit fists with Buck as they introduce themselves.

BUZZ
"Buzz" Blackburn.

BLOOD
"Blood" Bullard.

BOOM BOOM
"Boom Boom" Owens.

JACKAL
"Jackal" Fernandez.

ZEKE
"Zeke" Sakai.

PETER
"Peter" Carmichael.

BUCK
Peter? No call sign?

PETER
That is my call sign.

Buck lets out a gasp of disgust, but she's heard all this macho crap before.

HOLY JOE
So, you went beak-to-beak with a Fulcrum?

NARC
Heil der Hog!

ALL
Heil der Hog!

BUCK
Gentlemen...

HOLY JOE
Say no more. Shower!

The Pilots surround Buck and herd her away.

ALL
Shower! Shower!

BUCK
(looking back)
I thought the shower was that way.

NARC
Out of order.

BOOM BOOM
Leaky pipes.

JACKAL
Germans... plumbing...

They push Buck through a doorway labelled "PRIVATE," but none of them go in with her.

INT. LEIPHEIM AFB - PRIVATE SHOWER - DAY

Buck enters the small, steamy, two-nozzle shower. Another Pilot is already showering.

INT. LEIPHEIM AFB - PILOTS' LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Ty, ejected from the shower, slips, hits his head on a bench and lands on his stomach, naked. The Pilots laugh.

Buck pokes her head in from the shower.

BUCK
What are you laughing at? He's got a nicer tush than any of you ugly perverts.

Buck disappears and LOCKS the door. As the Pilots file out...

HOLY JOE
Hey, how does she know that?

BUZZ
Peeping Tomboy!

PETER
Do I look like an ugly pervert?

JACKAL
(answering Peter)
Is the Pope rich?

Ty gets up and sits on the bench, dazed and confused.

EXT. LEIPHEIM AFB - FLIGHTLINE - EVENING

As she walks from the Pilot Prep Building to the Officers' Quarters (OQ), Buck looks around, mystified, at the tired base. There are no signs of life, no noises until...

Eight motorcycles ROAR out from behind the OQ and down the flightline, right at Buck. One motorcycle has a sidecar.

They ROAR past her in two lines. It's the Pilots. They drive off like maniacs, swatting at each other. If you didn't know better, you'd swear they were teenagers.

INT. LEIPHEIM AFB - OFFICERS' QUARTERS - HALL - SAME

Buck walks down the hall to the last door, which is plastered with harsh unwelcome notices. She knocks, anyway. Nothing.

She tries the doorknob. Not locked. She opens the door.

INT. LEIPHEIM AFB - OFFICERS' QUARTERS - TY'S ROOM - SAME

Ty is bandaging his head at a mirror. When he sees Buck's reflection, he grabs a black pistol and whips around into a classic kneeling position, aiming the gun at her.

TY
Think twice!

BUCK
(raising her hands)
No need to shoot. I just wanted to...

TY
Read the door!

He shoves her out and slams the door.

INT. LEIPHEIM AFB - OFFICERS' QUARTERS - HALL - SAME

Buck reads the messages loudly, so that Ty can hear.

BUCK
Go away. Off limits. Zoomies suck.

Ty opens the door, [squirt] gun in hand, eyes glaring.

BUCK (cont'd)
For the record, I don't suck.

TY

Look, I don't care one way or the other.
You're not gonna be around here long
enough for it to matter, anyway.

BUCK

At last, some news I can live with.

TY

Not really.

Ty gives Buck an odd look, his brow furrowed, then starts to
slam the door, but Buck blocks it with her foot.

BUCK

Be careful. Your ammunition's leaking.

Ty squirts her in the face, squirts her again, and again.

A sigh and a hint of a smile suggest that Ty finally feels
better.

BUCK (cont'd)

I just want to know one thing...

Ty shuts the door. Buck asks the question, anyway.

BUCK (cont'd)

Who the fuck are you?

EXT. LEIPHEIM AFB - FLIGHTLINE - DAY

Buck, in a flight suit, follows Ramsey to the last hangar.

BUCK

General, what happened to my wingman?

RAMSEY

Flight instructor at Laughlin.

BUCK

Elvis loved Weapons School. He never
would have asked for --

RAMSEY

He didn't. You splashed your own wingman.

Ramsey stops at the hangar door and raps on it.

RAMSEY (cont'd)

I've requisitioned a new Falcon. In the
meantime...

INT. LEIPHEIM AFB - HANGAR - "THE STABLE" - DAY

The hangar doors open, revealing thirteen vintage fighters: the Spad [WWI era]; a P-51D Mustang, a Spitfire, an F4U Corsair, a P-38 Lightning, an F6F Hellcat, a P-40 "Flying Tiger," a P-47 Thunderbolt, a Hawker Hurricane, a Japanese Zero, and a German Fw-190 [all WWII era]; and, in front, two sleek, swept-wing F-86F Sabres [Korean Era].

RAMSEY

Welcome to The Stable.

Buck is astonished. Ramsey proudly introduces her to *BEAUTIOUS BUTCH*, a Sabre with a checkerboard tail and sixteen little red MiGs painted behind the gun ports on the fuselage.

RAMSEY (cont'd)

Meet *Beautiful Butch*.

BUCK

Joe McConnell's Sabre?

RAMSEY

Leading allied ace in Korea. You've met your flight instructor.

Buck turns around. Ty is standing there in a Korean Era flight suit, holding a white helmet under his arm.

TY

Any questions?

Ty puts on his helmet. "TY" is painted on it.

BUCK

How did you get your call sign?

Ty turns away and walks to the other Sabre, *MISS BEHAVING*.

RAMSEY

It's me he's pissed at. He wanted to be the new Piglet.

BUCK

So, let him.

RAMSEY

Too late. You're Hog, now. You have to defend your title... in *Beautiful Butch*, this time.

BUCK
With all due respect, General, I refuse
to dogfight again for your entertainment.

RAMSEY
Okay, okay. I understand how you feel.

BUCK
I doubt that.

RAMSEY
Tell you what, fly *Butch* for a month,
then decide whether you want to fly the
next Hogfight. It'll be your decision.

BUCK
And if I choose not to?

RAMSEY
There are plenty of pigs in the sty.

BUCK
Then, why me?

RAMSEY
Kozhedub, the MiG pilot you shot down --
I needed someone who could end his reign.

BUCK
(indicating Ty)
What about him?

RAMSEY
Without him here, we're fucked.

BUCK
What about the rest of the squadron?

RAMSEY
Have you seen them fly?

Buck makes a face -- she's seen them fly. She ponders.

BUCK
My decision?

RAMSEY
Absolutely.

EXT. SKY - DAY - AERIAL - TWO SABRES

Beautiful Butch and *Miss Behaving* climb in formation.

TY (FILTERED)
Well, Hog, you seem to have the hang of
it. Have a nice day.

Miss Behaving makes a shallow turn away from *Beautiful Butch*.

BUCK (FILTERED)
Excuse me, but aren't you supposed to
teach me to fly this plane?

TY (FILTERED)
Something tells me you don't need any
help with Butch. But, for the sake of
argument, don't let the bogey do this.

Miss Behaving rolls back and falls in behind *Beautiful Butch*.

Butch goes into a steep, rolling dive. *Miss* follows.

Butch pulls out just in time to avoid splashing into the
Danube. *Miss* follows on *Butch's* six (directly behind her).

The jets skim along the river at high speed. *Butch* is so low
that she kicks up a huge rooster tail.

INT. BEAUTIOUS BUTCH SABRE COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Buck smirks.

TY'S POV - BEAUTIOUS BUTCH

disappears in the spray of river water.

EXT. DANUBE - DAY

Butch pulls up sharply, pops flaps and cuts power.

Miss underflies *Butch*, leaving *Butch* behind her.

BUCK (FILTERED)
On your six! In the real Air Force, we
call that a stern conversion.

TY (FILTERED)
Like I said, you already got Butch all
over you.

BUCK (FILTERED)
All over me? You got *Butch* up your ass!
A familiar sensation, I'm sure.

INT. "BEAUTIOUS BUTCH" SABRE COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Buck looks at *Miss Behaving*, directly in front of her.

BUCK

What's your problem, anyway?

INT. "MISS BEHAVING" SABRE COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

TY

I'm as good as any jerk-off in this so-called squadron, but all I do here is wet-nurse you damn Piglets.

BUCK (FILTERED)

Well, if you're so damn good, let's see you get this [snort] Hog off your [Snort] [Snort] back. Soo-ee! Soooo-ee!

Really fired up, now, Ty slams the joystick to the right.

EXT. SKY - DAY - AERIAL - TWO SABRES

Miss Behaving rolls right. *Beautious Butch* FIRES a burst.

TY (FILTERED)

Jesus!

Miss Behaving rolls left. *Beautious Butch* FIRES again.

Miss Behaving rolls away from the line of TRACERS.

BUCK (FILTERED)

You're road kill!

Beautious Butch rolls opposite and dives away.

EXT. LEIPHEIM AFB - FLIGHTLINE - DAY

As Buck walks away from The Stable, Ty angrily grabs her arm.

TY

What the hell was that all about? Why'd you try to kill me?

BUCK

If I tried to kill you, you'd be splattered all over Bavaria, but now you won't be so eager to face a firing squad.

TY

That was a chickenshit stunt!

Squadron Pilots gather and enjoy the encounter.

BUCK

Well, it showed me what I needed to know.

TY

And what was that?

BUCK

You don't know dick about dogfighting.

TY

What the hell do you mean by that?

BUCK

You rolled away from the tracers, right into a tracking shot. You're a bogey's wet dream.

The Pilots snicker. Ty ignores them.

TY

I suppose you would have flown *into* the tracers?

BUCK

Beats getting killed.

TY

(totally lost)
What?

BUCK

A bogey is behind you, firing. He expects you to...?

TY

Roll away.

BUCK

And you...?

TY

Rolled away... but...

Buck illustrates with her hands. The Pilots move in closer.

BUCK

If he isn't shooting up your tailpipe, he's still pulling his nose around, at max Gs. You roll away from the tracers, you're rolling *into* his pursuit curve. You're doing his work for him. You roll
(MORE)

BUCK (cont'd)

to the tracers, you got five things going for you: it's a high deflection snapshot, little chance you'll get hit; he just fired a burst, he'll be cooling his barrels, so, by the time you get there, the air will be squeaky clean; you've initiated a reversal, or at least an escape; and, surprise, you did the opposite of what the bogey expected.

Buck walks toward the Pilot Prep Building.

TY

That's four, you said there were five.

BUCK

You live to write home about it.

The Pilots all look at Ty. He barks at them.

TY

What are you fucks looking at?

HOLY JOE

Smoke and flames.

The Pilots laugh. Ty strides away, humiliated, deflated.

INT. LEIPHEIM AFB - OFFICERS' QUARTERS - HOG'S ROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark. There's a KNOCK at the door. No response.

Ty enters, itching for a confrontation, but he finds Buck asleep on her bed, headphones on, a CD playing.

Ty pushes the "EXTERNAL SPEAKERS" button. MUSIC UP. He's surprised by the lyrical, melancholy song. He looks at...

PICTURES

- A) Buck (25), in a flight suit, standing beside an F-16.
- B) Buck (12) in the cockpit of a cropduster biplane painted like a WWI fighter of the Lafayette Escadrille.
- C) The cropduster flying low and kicking up a rooster tail of snow off a field.
- D) Buck (6) posing by the biplane with her Grandpa (55ish).
- E) Buck (1) with her Parents and two Grandparents (50ish).

Mellowed by this glimpse into Buck's personal life and her lyrical taste in music, Ty removes her headphones, pulls up her blanket, and looks at her -- so innocent and sweet. The hardness is all gone. She actually looks kind of pretty.

Ty turns off the stereo and pockets the CD and...

tiptoes out, closing the door quietly behind him.

EXT. SKY - DAY - AERIAL - TWO SABRES

Miss Behaving and *Beautious Butch* do wingovers at cloud base.

TY (FILTERED)

Well, Hog, how do you like her?

INT. "BEAUTIOUS BUTCH" SABRE COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Buck looks around, amused, at the rustic cockpit.

BUCK

I feel like it's midnight at the ball and my Ferrari turned into a tractor.

INT. "MISS BEHAVING" SABRE COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Ty laughs. He loosens his mask, making himself vulnerable.

TY (FILTERED)

Use a light touch. If you let her flow, *Butch* will dance like a ballerina.

BUCK (FILTERED)

Butch is a strange name for a ballerina.

TY

If you want to explore the slippery edges of a lady, you must first find her heart. *Butch* is a living organism, with feelings. She was the pride of the fleet. All she wants to do is fly. Listen to her heartbeat, feel her pulse. Restore her to her former glory.

BUCK (FILTERED)

I am your humble pupil. Show me the way.

Ty smiles and presses the "PLAY" button on a CD player.

TY

Okay, grasshopper, press play, and soar.

EXT. SKY - DAY - AERIAL - TWO SABRES

MUSIC UP (the lyrical song from Buck's CD). *Miss Behaving* leads *Beautious Butch* through a chandelle and a slow roll.

BUCK (FILTERED)

So, you're the one who stole my CD.

Beautious Butch breaks away and mirrors the aerobatics of *Miss Behaving* in a graceful aerial *pas de deux*.

TY (FILTERED)

Borrowed it.

BUCK (FILTERED)

I'm reporting you to security.

TY (FILTERED)

Report this!

Miss Behaving moves in behind *Beautious Butch*, and FIRES.

Beautious Butch rolls toward the tracers and flies through squeaky clean air.

EXT. LEIPHEIM AFB - FLIGHTLINE - DAY

Buck and Ty walk together, away from the parked Sabres.

TY

What's next on your dance card, Hog?

BUCK

A hot shower. Alone this time.

TY

Hey, don't go cold on me now.

BUCK

When the gear drops, the dancing stops.

TY

What do you want from me, anyway?

BUCK

(stopping and facing Ty)

Respect. I just want to be treated like any pilot in this fucked up squadron. No post-flight flirtation, no dirty puns, no special looks... just respect.

(walking away)

And don't call me Hog!

Hearing the ROAR of motorcycles, Buck turns and sees the Pilots driving motorcycles like maniacs. Holy Joe drives a Harley with Narc leaning perilously from the sidecar, grabbing Buzz and pulling him off his motorcycle.

Narc gets on Buzz's motorcycle. Buzz gets in the sidecar.

BUCK (cont'd)

Great. Mad Max and the Road Morons.

INT. LEIPHEIM AFB - ADMIN BLDG - RAMSEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Buck enters. She doesn't notice mean, spit-shined SP SERGEANT ZANDER in the back of the room. Ramsey puffs on a cigar.

RAMSEY

How do you like *Butch*?

BUCK

She's a dream, sir. Seat-of-your-pants flying, like the good ole days.

RAMSEY

The Hogfight is tomorrow. Are you ready?

BUCK

I decline to fly another Hogfight, sir.

RAMSEY

I'm sorry to hear that, Lieutenant.

Ramsey nods. Zander steps up and slaps handcuffs on Buck.

SP ZANDER

Lieutenant Jones, you are under arrest for the murder of Colonel Ivan Kozhedub.

BUCK

You've got to be kidding!

RAMSEY

(holding up a document)

Your signed confession.

(beat)

Always read the fine print.

INT. LEIPHEIM AFB - ADMIN BLDG - CONFINEMENT - NIGHT

Buck shivers in a small dark cell with a high, barred window.

INT. LEIPHEIM AFB - ADMIN BLDG - CONFINEMENT - DAY

General Ramsey enters with Zander. Buck is exercising.

RAMSEY

Well, Lieutenant, have you had a change of heart?

BUCK

No, sir... but, I will fly today... on two conditions.

RAMSEY

You're in no position to...

BUCK

One, make me squadron commander.

Ramsey stares at her, suspicious, but impressed by her moxie.

RAMSEY

And?

BUCK

(handing him a slip of paper)
Ship this here from my farm in Kansas, ASAP.

RAMSEY

You own a farm?

BUCK

My grandfather left it to me. I go there on vacation. Do a little dusting.

EXT. LEIPHEIM AFB - FLIGHTLINE - DAY

Standing by *Butch*, in a vintage flight suit, Buck is talking privately with Sergeant Barnes, who nods and grins until he notices something, stops grinning, and moves away from Buck.

Buck turns around. Ramsey snaps a photo.

EXT. LEIPHEIM AFB - ADMIN BLDG - DAY

Ty watches Buck and Ramsey take off in the Sabres.

EXT. SKY - DAY - AERIAL - TWO SABRES

Beautiful Butch abruptly moves directly behind *Miss Behaving*.

INT. "MISS BEHAVING" SABRE COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Ramsey looks around and sees Buck behind him.

RAMSEY

Go ahead, Hog. Shoot.

INT. "BEAUTIOUS BUTCH" SABRE COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Buck has her finger on the trigger and wants to fire, tries to make herself fire, but can't bring herself to do it.

She gives up and slides back to the four o'clock position.

BUCK

So, what am I up against?

RAMSEY (FILTERED)

MiG-15, piloted by Colonel Pepelyaev, a retired Russian ace. General Gurevich hires only the best.

Buck fires her GUNS.

INT. "MISS BEHAVING" SABRE COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Ramsey sees TRACERS streak past his plane. He smiles.

BUCK (FILTERED)

I suppose the ejection seat is disabled.

RAMSEY

Yank the chicken grip and it'll spit you out like a watermelon seed... but, when you look up, you'll see nothing but sky.

EXT. HOGFIGHT VALLEY - DAY - AERIAL - SABRES AND MIG-17S

Approaching the Sabres at high speed are two MiG-17s.

INT. "BEAUTIOUS BUTCH" SABRE COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Buck kisses the old parachute D-ring and puts it away.

She takes a hard look at the MiGs as the planes pass head-on.

BUCK (FILTERED)

Those aren't 15s, those're 17s!

EXT. HOGFIGHT VALLEY - DAY - AERIAL - SABRES AND MIG-17S

The lead MiG turns right and climbs, the wing MiG rolls left.

Miss Behaving turns right and climbs. *Butch* breaks left, then back to the right and climbs behind *Miss Behaving*.

RAMSEY (FILTERED)

A 17's just a 15 with an afterburner.

BUCK (FILTERED)

Then, you bag him!

RAMSEY (FILTERED)

For you, there's only one way out of this valley alive.

When the MiG closes on *Butch's* tail and FIRES, *Butch* rolls and dives for the ridge, the MiG hot on her tail.

RAMSEY (cont'd)

Don't leave the pit, Hog. Cross those peaks and you're toast.

Butch banks sharply left and skirts the hogback.

INT. "BEAUTIOUS BUTCH" SABRE COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Buck hears THUD THUD THUD as cannon shells hit her plane.

EXT. HOGFIGHT VALLEY - DAY - AERIAL - SABRE AND MIG-17

Butch dives along the ridge to the valley floor...

then pulls up into a loop, the MiG following.

The MiG kicks in afterburner, FIRING its cannons, but its TRACERS trail behind *Butch's* flight path.

Butch rolls at the top of the loop and waits for the MiG.

INT. "BEAUTIOUS BUTCH" SABRE COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Buck turns her head and watches for the MiG.

BUCK

C'mon, Pepe, bring it on around.

RAMSEY (FILTERED)

He's closing on you, Hog.

BUCK

Good.

Buck eases the joystick left and pulls it all the way back.

EXT. HOGFIGHT VALLEY - DAY - AERIAL - SABRE AND MIG-17

Butch rolls to inverted and dives. The MiG follows, its afterburner FLAMING like a Roman candle, its cannons FIRING, but the TRACERS are still trailing behind *Butch*.

Butch barely pulls out of the dive and scoots along the valley floor, kicking up dust and debris.

The MiG approaches the valley floor at a steeper angle.

INT. MIG-17 COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Pepelyaev sees that he's going to crash. He screams.

EXT. HOGFIGHT VALLEY - DAY

The MiG crashes in the meadow and EXPLODES.

RAMSEY (FILTERED)

That was brilliant, Hog. You splashed him without even firing a shot.

Butch climbs the ridge, and rolls to the right.

BUCK (FILTERED)

I didn't splash him. He flew himself into the ground.

INT. "BEAUTIOUS BUTCH" SABRE COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Buck looks down (right) and is startled to see a...

BUCK'S POV - SPECTATOR FACILITY

on the top of the ridge with People waving at her excitedly.

RAMSEY (FILTERED)

German ace Ernst Udet said, "When flying alone, make the ground your wingman."

INT. "BEAUTIOUS BUTCH" SABRE COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Buck shakes her head to clear it.

BUCK

News flash, General, your hero was a Nazi.

INT. "MISS BEHAVING" SABRE COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

RAMSEY

You know what they say -- the only good
Nazi is a Luftwaffe Nazi.

EXT. LEIPHEIM AFB - ADMIN BLDG - DAY

Anxiously pacing, Ty sees the Sabres approaching to land.
He sighs a deep sigh of relief.

INT. LEIPHEIM AFB - PILOTS' LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Buck enters. The Pilots cheer and greet her like a hero.

BUCK

Shut up, you worthless pukes!
(beat; looking mean)
You aren't a fighter squadron, you're a
clusterfuck of clowns. There isn't a
fighter pilot in the lot of you. But
that is going to change. Attention!

JACKAL

Who the fuck does she think she is?

BUCK

(in Jackal's face)
Your new Squadron Commander.

Surprised, ambushed, unsure, the Pilots come to attention.

BUCK (cont'd)

Follow me.

EXT. LEIPHEIM AFB - FLIGHTLINE - DAY

Buck addresses the Pilots, who stand sloppily at attention.

BUCK

Sergeant Barnes and I have designed a
more fitting insignia for you pussies.

Barnes removes the drape from the tail of an F-16. The tail
is pink beneath the new insignia: a circle surrounding a
winged tampon with eyes and a smile on the business end.

INT. LEIPHEIM AFB - OFFICERS' QUARTERS - HOG'S ROOM - NIGHT

Buck is awakened by POUNDING on doors (not hers) and yelling.

BLOOD (O.S.)
 RISE AND FLY! FIVE MINUTES TO TARMAC!
 GET YOUR GEAR DOWN! ICE THAT BONE, SEND
 DER FRAULEINS HOME! LET'S GO! LET'S GO!

EXT. LEIPHEIM AFB - FLIGHTLINE - PREDAWN

Blood leads exercises. The Pilots are wearing pink baseball caps and pink T-shirts with winged tampons on them. Around the insignia are the words: "WE ARE THE PUSSIES OF THE 328."

SERIES OF SHOTS

- A) Pilots wheelbarrow race in two-man teams.
- B) Ty and Buck beat the other four teams in a three-legged race.
- C) From the top height of a fork lift, Peter closes his eyes and falls backwards into the interlaced arms of Pilots.
- D) Buck climbs to the top of a rope, holds there, and encourages Buzz, the slowest climber. Boom Boom and Jackal reach the top and, following Buck's lead, hang and cheer Buzz until he reaches the top. The four then slide down together.

EXT. LEIPHEIM AFB - FLIGHTLINE - "THE STABLE" - DAY

Ramsey talks with Butler, who is carrying the camera.

BUTLER

I'm worried. Buck's training regimen is liable to foster an *esprit de corps* in the squadron.

RAMSEY

Good. It'll keep her spirits up. I need one more victory.

Buck, in World War II flight gear, walks up to Ramsey.

BUCK

Whose plane do I desecrate this time?

Ramsey proudly presents the Spitfire.

Buck counts the swastikas painted below the canopy.

BUCK (cont'd)

Thirty-four. Johnnie Johnson's Spitfire?

RAMSEY

The pride of the Stable.

BUCK
Where do you get all these old planes?

RAMSEY
The Sabres and MiGs from third world
countries; the warbirds are restorations.

Ramsey points to the Corsair. Ty is in the cockpit.

RAMSEY (cont'd)
A cherry Corsair, never wrecked, never
saw combat.

TY
Clear!

The Corsair engine SPUTTERS to life.

Buck smiles with realization when she sees "TYPHOID HARRY"
and a skull and crossbones painted on the Corsair engine
cowling.

RAMSEY
I paid over a million for this Spit, so
don't go cartwheeling down the runway.

BUCK
Yeah, I hate when I do that.

BUTLER
Smile.

Buck turns around and Butler snaps a picture.

EXT. SKY - DAY - AERIAL - SPITFIRE AND CORSAIR
climb together above cloudbase over the Danube.

BUCK (FILTERED)
She feels good. Tell me about this lady.

TY (FILTERED)
Hardly a lady. Spit's all muscle.

The Spitfire starts a loop. The Corsair matches it.

BUCK (FILTERED)
Chicken spin?

TY (FILTERED)
You're on.

Topping the loop, the planes' ENGINES drop to idle and the planes fall into inverted spins, in opposite directions.

EXT. LEIPHEIM AFB - RAMSEY'S QUARTERS - GARDEN - SAME

Outside Ramsey's house, not far from the Admin Building, Butler watches the planes spinning inverted toward the ground while Ramsey works calmly in his fenced rose garden.

BUTLER

Buck's a loose cannon. If she crashes that plane --

RAMSEY

Shut up, Major. You worry like an old lady.

Ramsey looks up and sees...

RAMSEY'S POV - C-130 HERCULES

transport plane landing on the main runway.

RAMSEY (O.S.)

(sarcastically)

God, I love the military. They won't pay a soldier minimum wage...

BACK TO SCENE

RAMSEY

(continuing)

... but they'll gladly ship some puke thingamajig half way around the world without even asking what the fuck it's for.

Ramsey sighs and goes back to work on his rose bushes. Butler, totally in the dark, decides not to ask.

INT. CORSAIR COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Ty watches the upside-down world spinning around.

EXT. SKY - DAY - AERIAL - SPITFIRE AND CORSAIR

The Corsair recovers from the spin just above the river.

The Spitfire crosses in front of the Corsair at high speed.

BUCK (FILTERED)

Captain, you are sitting on some major brass!

INT. CORSAIR COCKPIT (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

Ty grins ear-to-ear, delighted by Buck's praise.

TY

And you're yellow to the core!

BUCK (FILTERED)

Yeah, but it's yellow gold!

Ty chuckles. He's falling in love with Buck and he knows it.

EXT. LEIPHEIM AFB - FLIGHTLINE - "THE STABLE" - DAY

Still exhilarated, Buck and Ty dismount the Spit and Corsair. The C-130 is parked at the very end of The Stable hangar.

BUCK

If Spit's all muscle, that Corsair must be Arnold Schwarzenegger.

TY

No, she *is* a lady, beautiful and elegant, but dangerous, like Homer's Sirens, luring sailors to their doom. I just wish I could try landing it on a carrier deck. What a kick that'd be!

Ty sees Crewmen unloading a huge wooden crate from the C-130.

INT. LEIPHEIM AFB - ADMIN BLDG - RAMSEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Ramsey reads a letter from a shoebox of letters on his desk. Butler enters. Ramsey drops the letter back in the shoebox. A package, ready to ship, sits on his desk.

RAMSEY

How many times has Buck tried to call off base?

BUTLER

Thirty-three. You know, eventually she's going to get through.

RAMSEY

So what?

(handing the package to Butler)

Put this on that C-130. Top priority to Dutch.

BUTLER

Who?

RAMSEY
General Hollander, at Nellis, you cretin.

INT. LEIPHEIM AFB - OFFICERS' QUARTERS - HALL - NIGHT

Buck goes down the hall POUNDING on Pilots' doors.

BUCK
ON THE TARMAC! SCRAMBLE! LET'S GO,
GIRLS! MOVE IT, MOVE IT, MOVE IT!

EXT. LEIPHEIM AFB - FLIGHTLINE - NIGHT

Calling cadence, Buck marches the shivering Pilots double-time toward the far end of The Stable hangar.

BUCK
We are Squadron Three Two Eight.

PILOTS
We are Squadron Three Two Eight!

BUCK
Pilots call us bogey bait.

PILOTS
Pilots call us bogey bait!

BUCK
Couldn't fly if we had wings.

PILOTS
Couldn't fly if we had wings!

BUCK
We'd rather touch our little things.

PILOTS
We'd rather touch our little things!

EXT. LEIPHEIM AFB - END OF "THE STABLE" HANGAR - NIGHT

Pilots look with dread at what is in store for them.

Barnes and his Crewmen watch, amused, while policing up the crating.

Floodlights shine on a contraption with a seat in a circular frame inside another frame. Peter is in the seat and begins spinning wildly on two axes, powered by the business half of a bicycle which Buzz is pedalling furiously. Peter pukes.

Buzz stops pedalling. While Peter unstraps and falls out, sick, Buck hoses down both him and the contraption.

BUCK

Girls, meet the PukeMaster, a dogfight sensation simulator. You graduate when you can go sixty seconds without puking.

JACKAL

Yeah, like you could.

Buck straps herself into the seat, then looks at Jackal.

Jackal mounts the bike and pedals as fast as he can.

EXT. "ESCADRILLE FLIGHT SERVICE" AIRSTRIP - DAY - FLASHBACK

Grandpa (60ish) pedals as fast as he can while Buck (10) whirls around and around in the PukeMaster, enjoying it.

BACK TO SCENE

BOOM BOOM

Jesus. It's been five minutes.

The PukeMaster stops whirling; Jackal can't pedal any more.

Buck gets out and faces the Pilots. She's perfectly steady.

BUCK

Every puke of you gets a turn, every day.
(to Jackal, in his face)
You get two.

Buck walks to Barnes and says something privately to him. Barnes nods and they walk into The Stable hangar together.

The Pilots are hesitant to take their turns in the PukeMaster. Ty steps up and straps himself in.

INT. LEIPHEIM AFB - HANGAR - "THE STABLE" - NIGHT

Barnes turns off the welding TORCH and lifts his visor. Buck watches him fasten a cable to the loop he welded to a barrel.

BARNES

(giving the cable a hard pull)
That oughta hold.

BUCK

Sergeant, this Hogfighting is criminal.
How does Ramsey get away with it?

BARNES
What's the best lubricant in the world?

BUCK
Uh... Quaker State?

Barnes looks around nervously, afraid of getting caught. He turns up the MUSIC on his boom box to cover the conversation.

BARNES
Money. Greases anything. Everyone on this base gets a cash bonus every month.

BUCK
Fuck money! Pilots are dying!

BARNES
That's *their* choice.

BUCK
I didn't have a choice.

BARNES
Yeah, that sucks. The others were all itching to be Hog. Retired lifers, bored, missing the adrenaline. The first three had... diseases.

BUCK
What about the planes? The Air Force must question the losses.

BARNES
The older planes are Ramsey's, and we've only lost three Falcons in two years.

BUCK
I can't believe no one has reported this.

Ramsey walks up behind them.

RAMSEY
I can explain that, Lieutenant.

Barnes goes rigid. Ramsey turns off Barnes' boom box, then, in a paternal tone, uses Barnes for his illustration.

RAMSEY (cont'd)
Sergeant Barnes was handpicked -- single, no family. He's been in, well, trouble. Leipzig is his last chance...
(ominously; to Barnes)
... and he's seen what happens to whistle-
(MORE)

RAMSEY (cont'd)
blowers.
(flips down Barnes' visor)
Carry on, Sergeant.

Barnes fires up the TORCH and starts welding another loop.

RAMSEY (cont'd)
Bribery, blackmail, and intimidation.
A powerful team, Lieutenant.

Ramsey walks away. Barnes turns down the torch.

BARNES
I don't like it, Sir, none of us do, but
there's nothing we can do about it.

Barnes turns up the noisy welding TORCH and welds a loop to another barrel. Buck walks out, frustrated and angry.

INT. LEIPHEIM AFB - ADMIN BLDG - RAMSEY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

RING. The computer displays a phone number being dialed.

COMPUTER VOICE
I'm sorry, but all lines are busy.
Try again later, please.

INT. LEIPHEIM AFB - OFFICER'S QUARTERS - HOG'S ROOM - NIGHT

Buck slams down the telephone receiver. She's furious.

BUCK
Busy for a month?
(looking around her room)
Where the hell are my pictures?

INT. EDWARDS AFB - OFFICERS' QUARTERS - ELVIS'S ROOM - DAY

Elvis opens a package addressed to him at Edwards AFB.

He takes out charred, bent dogtags. He's stunned. Shocked.

He takes out a letter and reads it.

DUTCH (V.O.)
Dear Major Archer, I regret to inform you
that Captain J. R. Jones died in a tragic
accident. According to the report, the
gear collapsed during a deadstick
landing. Both plane and pilot were lost.
As Buck had no living relatives, I am
sending her personal effects to you, her
closest friend. Buck was a great pilot,
(MORE)

DUTCH (V.O.) (cont'd)
 an inspiration to all of us who share the
 joys and risks of patrolling the skies in
 the defense of freedom. Please accept my
 heartfelt condolences. Sincerely,
 General Frank Hollander.

He takes out Buck's photos and looks at them through tears.

INT. LEIPHEIM AFB - OFFICERS' QUARTERS - HALL - NIGHT

Buck's door opens. Ty hands a CD to her.

TY
 For tomorrow's flight.

BUCK
 It's kind of late.

TY
 Sorry, I'm still wound kinda tight.
 Defying death really gets the adrenaline
 flowing, gets you pumped up on life.

BUCK
 I know what you mean. Wanna come in?

TY
 Oh, no, no, thank you... I just wanted
 to... you know... the... thing.

BUCK
 Thanks. I'm looking forward to our next
 flight... Wet Dream.

Buck closes the door. Ty all but falls against the wall.

TY
 Ohhhhh, get your gear down, fool!

INT. LEIPHEIM AFB - OFFICERS' QUARTERS - HOG'S ROOM - NIGHT

Wearing the headphones, Buck starts Ty's CD, lies back on her
 bed and closes her eyes. MUSIC UP.

FADE TO:

EXT. SKY - DAY - AERIAL - BIPLANE - DREAM SEQUENCE

MUSIC OVER SCENE. GRANDPA (60) flies a biplane fitted for
 crop-dusting, painted like a WWI Lafayette Escadrille Spad.
 Sitting in the rear cockpit, Buck (12) puts her face in the
 wind. She and Grandpa have to yell over the ENGINE noise.